

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A process for preparing chlorine by catalytic gas-phase oxidation of hydrogen chloride, which comprises the steps:

- a) providing a feed gas stream I comprising hydrogen chloride and a feed gas stream II comprising oxygen;
- b) in a first oxidation stage, feeding the feed gas stream I, the feed gas stream II, ~~if desired a recycle stream Ia comprising hydrogen chloride and if desired an oxygen-containing recycle stream IIa~~ into a first oxidation zone and bringing them into contact with a first oxidation catalyst so that a first partial amount of the hydrogen chloride is oxidized to chlorine and a gas stream III comprising chlorine, unreacted oxygen, unreacted hydrogen chloride and water vapor is obtained;
- c) in a second oxidation stage, feeding the gas stream III into a second oxidation zone and bringing it into contact with at least one further oxidation catalyst so that a second partial amount of the hydrogen chloride is oxidized to chlorine and a product gas stream IV comprising chlorine, unreacted oxygen, unreacted hydrogen chloride and water vapor is obtained;
- d) isolating chlorine, ~~if desired the recycle stream Ia and if desired the recycle stream IIa~~ from the product gas stream IV,

wherein the first oxidization catalyst in the first oxidation zone is present in a fluidized bed and the further oxidation catalyst or catalysts in the second oxidation zone is/are present in a fixed bed.

Claim 2 (Currently Amended): ~~[[A]]~~ The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the temperature in the first oxidation zone is from 280 to 360°C and that in the second oxidation zone is from 220 to 320°C.

Claim 3 (Currently Amended): ~~[[A]]~~ The process as claimed in claim 1 ~~[[or 2]]~~, wherein the second oxidation zone comprises only one fixed-bed reactor.

Claim 4 (Currently Amended): ~~[[A]]~~ The process as claimed in ~~any of claims 1 to 3~~ claim 1, wherein the second oxidation zone has only one temperature zone.

Claim 5 (Currently Amended): ~~[[A]]~~ The process as claimed in ~~any of claims 1 to~~ ~~[[4]]~~ claim 1, wherein the oxidation catalysts comprise ruthenium oxide on a support selected from among silicon dioxide, aluminum oxide, titanium dioxide and zirconium dioxide.

Claim 6 (Currently Amended): ~~[[A]]~~ The process as claimed in ~~any of any claims 1 to~~ ~~5~~ claim 1, wherein step d) comprises the steps:

d1) separating off hydrogen chloride and water from the product gas stream IV to give a gas stream V comprising chlorine and oxygen;

d2) drying the gas stream V;

d3) separating off an oxygen-containing stream from the gas stream V ~~and, if desired,~~ ~~recirculating at least part of it as oxygen-containing recycle stream IIa to the first oxidation zone,~~ leaving a chlorine-containing product stream VI;

d4) and ~~if appropriate, further~~ purifying the chlorine-containing product stream VI.

Claim 7 (New): The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein a stream Ia comprising hydrogen chloride is recycled into the first oxidation zone.

Claim 8 (New): The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein a stream IIa comprising oxygen is recycled into the first oxidation zone.

Claim 9 (New): The process as claimed in claim 5, wherein at least part of oxygen-containing stream is recycled to the first oxidation zone.